

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Deb EDDY

48<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Real progress in education

Although I am concerned about the sticker-shock that will come with the Education Funding Task Force’s report later this year, we took some positive steps this year to improve teacher salaries (4.4 percent, across the state) and to increase the number of all-day kindergarten slots.

I am still new enough to the legislature to admit to a little surprise at how education policy became so entangled in the WASL. But we’re returning to some common sense in certain areas. In HB 3166 and SB 6673, we converted math



skill assessment to an end-of-course exam (we needed a state law to do this?) and provided remedial help for students. We’re also continuing to move toward a fixed number of math curricula, from which local communities can pick and choose. Mathematics subject matter is the same in Bellevue or Bridgeport. I’m glad we’re finally acknowledging the huge burden it is for kids to have a completely new curriculum anytime they move or change schools.

The supplemental budget also included \$140 million to reduce class size and to provide incentives for teachers to work in tough fields or to get nationally certified. We provided some necessary attention to smaller programs that have gaping needs, like special education (\$75 million) and transportation costs (\$25 million).

Lurching toward health care reform

Reforming health care in the United States is going to be difficult, contentious, expensive ... and delayed. While there’s widespread agreement that we’ve got a problem, and that the real long-term cost drivers include chronic disease and end-of-life expenses – after that, agreement tends to break down.

In ESB 5261, we returned control of individual policy premium increases to the state insurance commissioner. While insurance rate increases have been in double-digits for several years, individual policy holders have been hardest hit. This bill was proposed last year, but was deemed unnecessary.

Shortly after we left Olympia, individual insurance rates soared by as much as 40 percent, even though insurance companies posted record-setting profits. So it’s no surprise that this bill was resuscitated and passed easily this session. This bill will not “fix” health care, but it’s a step toward holding insurance companies accountable for their business practices.



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2008 Session Re-cap

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2008 Session Re-cap

Friends and neighbors –

End of session occasions a review of the past two years, what we accomplished, what didn’t get done ... and what ideas should be shelved permanently. Overall, I’m pleased with the results of our work, but there’s much more to do.

Here’s a heads up: On occasion, a lobbyist will take me aside to explain that a vote I’ve taken will be recorded as a “bad” vote on their group’s scorecard. Before I got to Olympia, I knew nothing about legislative report cards. Advocacy groups compile lists of bills that serve their interests and record our votes on those bills. Our individual score or ranking is based on the number of times we voted in concert with that group.

Fair warning: I’m not likely to get a top ranking from any group. My votes are based on an assessment of each bill against principles based primarily on what I believe is in the public’s interest. That would be you, the people I represent.

Groups like Washington Conservation Voters, Transportation Choices Coalition or the Association of Washington Business provide needed perspective and passion to the debate. But it’s well to remember that these are, first and foremost, activists for their cause.

I also work hard to reflect the diversity that exists in this district. We stretch from the western shore of Lake Sammamish to the eastern shore of Lake Washington, encompassing many points of view. We’re not a one-policy-fits-all sort of place.

In this newsletter, I’ve covered the issues that seem most important to the district. If you have other concerns, don’t hesitate to be in touch.

As always, I am honored to be your representative.



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Deb EDDY

48<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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Local Government

Transportation

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Legislative Town Hall

Join Reps. Eddy and Hunter, and Sen. Tom, for a town hall focused entirely on budget and revenue issues. This time is set aside exclusively for the fiscal discussion that many of you have asked for.

Tuesday, May 20

6:00 to 7:15 pm

Redmond City Hall

City Council Chamber  
15670 NE 85th ST  
Redmond, WA 98052

## #1 Issue: State Route 520 Bridge

After the defeat of Proposition 1 last fall, we had to jump-start work on the SR 520 bridge. Legislators from both sides of the bridge met throughout the session to get the design finalized and construction launched.

We made the final decision on configuration of the corridor at 4+2+expandability, ensuring necessary rights of way and transit connections, and launched a public outreach and analysis effort on tolling in the SR 520 and I-90 corridors. The transit connection at the UW light rail station is the most critical remaining issue (no, it’s not settled yet), and

I expect further work throughout the year to nail down those details.

The tolling bill, HB 1773, makes clear that only the legislature can impose tolls, and that tolls must be used for transportation purposes in the corridors where collected. Contrary to media stories, no firm decisions on early tolling were made. We’ll have an extensive analysis of options at the beginning of the next session; we’ll go from there.

In addition to early pontoon construction, we kept all projects, including ferry procurement and improvements on US 2 over Stevens Pass, on track in the face of escalating costs and diminished revenues.

To remind you: past legislators committed all of the anticipated revenue from both the nickel and 9-1/2 cent gas tax increases to a fixed list of projects. There will come a time when we can’t accommodate any further cost increases or revenue reductions. But so far, so good.

## Privacy: It’s in the Constitution

I passed a bill this year, SHB 2729, which prohibits the scanning of the unique identifier number on the new Enhanced Driver’s License RFID chip. The license, cheaper than a regular passport, will serve as an adequate identification document for travel in and out of Canada and Mexico.

This privacy bill, a priority for me, passed by a large bipartisan vote, showing the breadth of concern with this new technology. Stakeholders, including the ACLU and Washington Retail Association, have agreed to continue to work on how to limit the surveillance potential of wireless tracking devices, which raise issues under both the 4th and 5th Amendments.

Many people assume that any semblance of privacy in America is already gone in the face of FISA, the internet and customer loyalty cards. When we take office, however, we swear to uphold the Constitution. So while the public may be unconcerned, elected officials still have to consider the constitutional implications.

Last summer, the Shidler Center for Law, Commerce + Technology at the UW Law School put on a symposium on this topic. You can get more information at <http://www.law.washington.edu/lct/events/rfid/>. At agenda item 5, click on the link for the short paper that I authored on this topic.

## Climate change, energy freedom, and the Growth Management Act

This year we passed HB 2815, the Climate Change/Green Jobs bill, which will direct state agencies to develop concrete ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).

The governor signed another bill, SB 6580, that will help cities and counties plan for a landscape that supports the reduction of GHG. I believe it will also have a beneficial effect on housing production close to city centers — and cut cities’ energy costs.

In Washington, over half of our GHG comes from the transportation sector. To reduce emissions, we will need to decrease our reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and/or increase our reliance on transit. This will not happen by simply announcing it to one and all.

Those who promote pricing us out of our cars miss an important point: We can’t get out of our cars until (1) real travel alternatives exist and/or (2) there are affordable housing options closer to schools, shopping centers and jobs. Right now, neither exists.

I am primarily responsible for the rewrite of ESSB 6580, which brings elected officials and stakeholders together to discuss exactly how we can reduce GHG through land use policies. Since cities and counties will be charged with making it work, it will go faster if they have a hand in setting state direction.

Of course, many cities – including Bellevue, Redmond, Kirkland, Issaquah and the Points communities – are already reducing their own energy use and working to increase housing densities close to transit and other services. But we know it isn’t enough, as vehicle miles traveled continues to increase. So we need to tackle this thorny question, but with care and focus.

## Good news for the state, generally

The non-partisan Pew Center on the States has been assessing government performance for some years. In their [Grading the States 2008](#) report, in partnership with *Governing* magazine, the Pew Center gave Washington an A- for its performance in managing public resources, tied for first place with Utah and Virginia.

The Pew Center stated, “Washington has been well managed during challenging economic circumstances, delivering strong services to the public and effectively managing the state’s dollars.” This is not a vanity report; this same assessment project gave King County some Cs and maybe a D a few years ago. It can be accessed online at <http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/gpp/>.

The news on this came out last year, but it’s worth re-stating that Forbes Magazine ranked Washington’s business climate 5th in the nation. Read about it at <http://www.forbes.com>; it’s in the July 10, 2007 issue.

So while the national economy may be in for a rough ride, and we will certainly feel the effects, I’m optimistic with these reports that our state will continue to be well-positioned to recover from economic instability more quickly than most other states.

## In-box hot topics

Every year, there are issues that light up the phone lines and flood my email box. I have answered all of them — or will, soon. In case you got too busy to send a message on one of these topics, here are the answers, anyway.

### SB 6900 – Vehicle Displacement Fee

This is the bill that would have added a vehicle surcharge, based on engine displacement measured in liters. This bill never made it out of the Senate committee, and I wouldn’t have supported it, if it had. It had a good intention — to have the Hummers and Escalades pay for some of their negative environmental impacts. Unfortunately, it had more bad impacts than good ones, so it died. However, a warning email continues to circulate on the web, so I’m still getting an occasional email on this topic, now weeks later.

## Homeowner protection issues

Sen. Brian Weinstein promoted a bill, SB 6385, that would give homeowners a right to sue builders for shoddy construction. On first hearing, this sounds like a no-brainer. However, in the judgment of many of us in the House, the bill suffered from a lack of problem definition and analysis.

Bills introduced over the last two years presented anecdotes and a solution for those aggrieved homeowners, but had no real supporting data nor any consideration of optional cures. Rep. Mark Ericks and I cosponsored a bill that would have authorized a review of the sufficiency of contractor licensing standards and bonding, but that bill died in the Senate. We will be working on this issue during interim; it’s an important consumer protection issue that deserves a thorough analysis and examination of possible solutions.